

June 20th 2016

It's great to see crowded streets and sidewalks in Bridgton – summer is in full swing! I know it's taking longer to get through town but hopefully you will stop and enjoy the area. I know how inconvenient it is, as well with the construction on Route 302 and all, but it's a wonderful thing that the state of Maine is investing transportation dollar here so I'll happily crank that radio while I wait for my turn to pass.

The streetscape design development project is winding down to completion. We certainly heard from a lot of folks on voting day last week about how you felt! We have heard comments about why do the streetscape at all – I will tell you that the “bang for your buck” investment in the downtown makes you competitive economically. Businesses want to locate to towns that take care of and invest in themselves. Downtown investment also increases the value of living in downtown neighborhoods and studies show again and again that private investment follows public investment. If we care about ourselves as a community, then business cares about us as a community. Next time you are perusing the internet, go to strongtowns.org – they lay out these values very well.

Additionally, the focus has been upon the roundabouts, and most of it is negative. We will be looking at alternatives for both Pondicherry Square and the monument with Maine DOT for these intersections; however I do hope folks will do some research on the benefits of roundabouts. With exception of a few, roundabouts have proven to reduce accidents, move traffic more efficiently and at slower speeds. They also can provide a great gateway entrance to a core business district. The visioning session with the public last spring came up with the concept for the monument area and that is how roundabouts got studied as an alternative. Nationally, communities see traffic lights **not** as a sign of progress and instead are changing them to roundabouts with success. It is not regressive to analyze roundabouts as a possible alternative to these high traffic intersections, even if we end up making general improvements to the intersection as is without any roundabouts. Design development as a phase of this project is set up for the purpose of working through innovative ideas. Read some information here:

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/innovative/roundabouts/> Mythbusters tv show even did a segment on it: <http://www.streetsblog.net/2013/10/10/mythbusters-finds-roundabouts-more-efficient-for-motorists/> As stated, though, as requested, we will look at other alternatives to roundabouts.

The process continues with the Select Board reviewing final design development plans. Next we will be looking at alternatives with Maine DOT and commence engineering and further analysis to prepare a construction drawing bid set, We will use this set of plans to then seek a myriad of funding sources for construction. The Select Board, in workshops and public hearings, along with abutting downtown business and property owners will play an active role on this phase of work.

The Community Development Committee is continuing their work on improving promotion of events and generally all the great things we have going here in Bridgton. Part of their effort falls into staff's work on our public outreach. The town will embark on a new branding and website project soon so let us know what information is of value to you when you go to the website.

The Land Use & Zoning Committee is finalizing their working draft of a land use ordinance that covers private properties from the area around the monument on Main Hill down the 302 corridor to the Naples line. This has been a mammoth project for them and they have done so well with their care and focus. The committee's works seeks to respect the policies and ideals Bridgton voters said they wanted

during the comprehensive plan process. The committee will go to the Planning Board at their meeting June 21st and again to the Select Board at their meeting June 28th to present their work thus far. We will post the working draft on the town's website and I have paper copies here for anyone who wants to see current drafts. It's a continual work in progress until mid-July. Also, this draft will go to legal review this week. The approach to the ordinance the committee has taken is known as a form-based approach; what this means is the regulation is more attentive to the details, layout of the building and the site development than the use. Uses are addressed but the "prime directive" (aside: it's not a complete department message without a star trek reference) is how it fits into the downtown, or, how it changes the corridor. The committee will be asking the Select Board to place a final draft to the Bridgton voters for the November ballot election.

The bathroom at Woods Pond is almost completed – staff is performing inspections this week. We are also preparing a bid document for the bathroom and changing room at Salmon Point.

Thank you all who came to vote on the ballot this year – we are so grateful you said yes to the wastewater ordinance! I know you likely experienced some voter fatigue with the public education piece for this ordinance; but that shows you the importance of this change! We will now embark on the technical implementation of this ordinance, working with the engineers for this project.

The Greater Portland Council of Governments had their annual meeting this past week. As a representative of you, the town of Bridgton, I was elected to First Vice-President this year. This exposure of Bridgton to the greater Portland region is another important piece for promotion and networking for the economic development focus of my position.

Speaking of my position, a compelling argument/question was made at town meeting about my position; that is, the benefit of the position, how many jobs were created and return on investment questions to the same. The vote was taken before I could weigh in but it's a fascinating question. The position is composed of 3 parts, planning, economic development and community development. The projects I work on blend all of those functions together, so it's hard to say they are evenly split as to my time. It depends upon the project, and again, everything affects each function so a percentage-based analysis is difficult. Another perspective is to see the position not as an investment with the hope of a return, like a salesperson selling a product (though I do sell the town in my promotional work – also, I am eternally grateful I sold shoes on commission in high school and college as it's a great skill,) but rather a provided service. I work on long-range planning projects, capital projects, land use ordinances that focus on growth areas as well as protections for what people see as important to them, network and attend trade shows in the region and out of state to get Bridgton's name out there, meet with businesses that are looking to come here, look to get new business to come here, keep up with the profession, etc. So, is this an investment, or are these services? If it's an investment, to perform a cost-benefit analysis would be almost impossible. Though I play a part in new business development, I certainly wouldn't shine a spotlight on myself to say they are here solely because of me; this would be an insult to their decision making as so many things go into such a decision for a new business owner or investor. Because the position is multi-functional and all the projects blend together, I see the position as a service to the town. I do welcome the debate on this point, though, as this question is pondered often amongst my colleagues in other communities all over the country.

In other news, I never knew the finance director was so popular here until I switched office spaces with her! I am now in Charisse's space and she has moved down the hall but I get people peeking in to see

her and they hesitate when they see me and say “oh it’s you...” which is hilarious. It’s always good for an office laugh at least!

I am working on my fiscal year goals and objectives taken from the approved at town meeting budget, which is a great endeavor. Working on a fiscal year calendar gives you another chance, another new year’s to celebrate, and for renewal, so it’s an exciting time.

I am helping the Massachusetts Chapter of American Planning Association with their strategic plan, which is always good practice for me so I can do the same service here. I will be attending the retreat for the Board at the Maine Association of Planners for their strategic plan, get some Community Development Block Grant training, and, go to the annual meeting of the Economic Development Council of Maine. I also will take some vacation time, as I hope you will do as well, to spend time with family.

Enjoy these warm summer days in the lakes region as the cold days are behind us – it is a continued honor to serve you in the functions of planning, economic development and community development.

Best wishes for summer!

Anne Krieg AICP
Bridgton Planning & Development Director